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Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 06962 052131Z

70
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NIC-01 SCCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03

H-01 INR-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 CU-02 /057 W
---------- 095654
R 052039Z DEC 74
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2486
INFO GOV PANCANAL

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, PN
SUBJECT: INCIDENT INVOLVING BUS DRIVERS AND STUDENTS

1. DURING EARLY MORNING HOUR (0045) NOV. 29, CANAL ZONE POLICE STOPPED THREE PANAMANIAN BUSSES RACING ABREAST ACROSS THATCHER FERRY BRIDGE. BUSSES WERE TRANSPORTING ABOUT 200 PANAMANIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS, MANY OF WHOM HAD BEEN DRINKING AND SOME OF WHICH WERE DRUNK. BUS DRIVERS IGNORED FLASHING LIGHTS AND SIRENS AND WERE OVER-TAKEN BY PATROL CAR AND FORCED TO STOP. THREE DRIVERS WERE ARRESTED AND BUSSES MOVED FROM BRIDGE. LATER ABOUT 50 PASSENGERS DEBUSSED AND FIGHT BROKE OUT BETWEEN TWO STU-DENTS LEADING TO THEIR HANDCUFFING, ARREST AND REMOVAL. THIS LED TO SOME STUDENT PROTEST AND DEMANDS FOR RELEASE OF STUDENTS. NATIONAL GUARD WAS INFORMED AND DETACHMENT OF SOME 20 GUARDSMEN AND REPRESENTATIVE OF GN G-2 ARRIVED TO ASSIST. ARRESTED STUDENTS WERE CHARGED WITH DISTURBING THE PEACE AND RELEASED BY 1:45 A.M. ON SIGNED AGREEMENT TO APPEAR DEC. 4. BUS DRIVERS WERE CITED FOR RECKLESS DRIVING AND DEPARTED ZONE WITH BUSSES BY 2:26 A.M.
GN OFFICERS REMARKED THAT INCIDENT HAD CAUSED COMPLETE ALERT OF NATIONAL GUARD AND THAT "ALL THE COLONELS ARE INTERESTED".
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PAGE 02 PANAMA 06962 052131Z

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2. ON AFTERNOON SAME DAY DIRECTOR OF PANAMA-AMERICA PUBLISHED EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF INCIDENT STATING IRRESPONSIBLE AND PROVOCATIVE ACTION BY ZONE POLICE COULD HAVE CAUSED GRAVE INCIDENT. ESTRELLA AND STAR HERALD CARRIED REPORT OF INCIDENT BASED ON CZG INFORMATION OFFICE RELEASE WHICH WAS FACTUAL AND RECALLED 1971 ACCIDENT IN WHICH SPEEDING BUS ON THATCHER FERRY BRIDGE LOST CONTROL AND CRASHED RESULTING IN 38 DEATHS. DOMINICAL (SUNDAY EDITION OF PANAMA-AMERICA) CARRIED FACTUAL VERSION AND EDITOR'S NGQE THAT CZG POLICE TREATMENT OF INCIDENT AS TRAFFIC VIOLATION DID NOT WARRANT PROVOCATIVE ARREST OF STUDENTS. COLUMNIST IN SAME EDITION GAVE CREDENCE TO BOTH VERSIONS, CRITICIZING BOTH STUDENT AND BUS DRIVER BEHAVIOR AS WELL AS ZONIANS WHO SEEK ANYTHING AS PRETEXT TO UNDO KISSINGER'S 8 POINTS.

3. EMBASSY DISCUSSED INCIDENT WITH AMB. GONZALEZ-REVILLA PRIOR HIS RETURN TO WASHINGTON. HE INDICATED LITTLE DIRECT KNOWLEDGE OF EVENT AND SUGGESTED WE SPEAK TO LT. COL. NORIEGA, GN G-2, WHO IS PRESENTLY IN PERU IN CONNECTION WITH AYACUCHO CEREMONIES.

4. COMMENT: POUCHING COPIES OF CZG POLICE REPORT AND PRESS CLIPPINGS TO ARA/PAN. WE WILL ATTEMPT DISCUSS MATTER WITH COL. NORIEGA UPON HIS RETURN BUT ABSENCE OF FURTHER PRESS COMMENTARY AFTER INITIAL SLANTED REPORT AND COOPERATION OF NATIONAL GUARD DURING INCIDENT SUGGEST THAT POTENTIAL FOR TROUBLE HAS DIMINISHED CONSIDERABLY.
GONZALEZ

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
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Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARRESTS, STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS, PANAMA CANAL ZONE, POLICE FORCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 DEC 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: izenbei0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740353-1044
From: PANAMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741258/aaaabxhk.tel
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Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Review Authority: izenbei0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
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EO Systematic Review
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Secure: OPEN
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